



# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Contact:** Pati Brown, Capital District Marketing Director  
(916) 445-4098  
Sheryl Watson, Information Officer  
(916) 654-7538

July 10, 2007

## **Delving into Walls Reveals Once Lost History Governor's Mansion State Historic Park Takes New Direction**

**SACRAMENTO** – A new era has been uncovered at the Governor's Mansion State Historic Park, one that was hidden from view for nearly a century.

Ornate wall decorations from the late 1800s, that had been covered over and forgotten in the early 1900s, were discovered by a curious restoration specialist on his lunch hour.

The walls he had just primed and prepared for yet another layer of 1950s wallpaper, held a secret. The clue was a piece of plaster crown molding he found earlier inside a false walled-in enclosure, resting atop a water tank. The lavender and sage stripes contrasted with its tan base coat, which was set apart from a faded baby-blue stripe a few inches over. Nothing else like it existed in the house. Where did it come from and why was it here? He wanted to solve this mystery.

Back in the main room, Restoration Work Specialist Tim Gellinck, of California State Parks, took a bit of denatured alcohol to one corner of a wall. As he carefully rubbed away years of primer, plaster and paint, a sliver of pink began to appear. Then came white scroll work with a tan base coat and he knew that he found something rare and valuable.

He discovered that the walls and ceiling had originally been painted to look like moldings, recessed ceilings, frames, and wood carved scroll work. The paint style made to fool the eye, or trompe l'oeil (TROMP LOY), also included carom billiard balls and cue sticks at one end of a room's ceiling, now thought to be the billiard room. (PHOTOS AVAILABLE)

"This is an amazing discovery," said State Parks Director Ruth Coleman. "After all of these years, to think, that in our lifetime, we can now see first hand the artistry that was applied to these walls 130 years ago."

### **Maintaining the Structure**

The maintenance work on the third floor is a small part of a \$1.2 million deferred maintenance project.

"We are grateful to the Governor for allocating the deferred maintenance funds necessary to do maintenance work at this and other parks," said Coleman.

**(more)**

---

**For energy efficient recreation –  
California State Parks on the Internet: <<http://www.parks.ca.gov>>**



The majority of the deferred maintenance project is in stabilizing, protecting and preserving the entire exterior of both the mansion and the carriage house. It also includes work on the basement, where offices and a bathroom are being made accessible to people with disabilities, as well as, electrical systems repair and enhancements to the security system.

"We are going to preserve what we can and replace what needs to be replaced," said Lyman Gray, park maintenance chief of California State Park's Capital District who is managing the project. "In doing this work we are relying on the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to guide this process."

When work began on the third floor, the plaster ceilings showed large cracks. There were sections of plaster that had simply fallen to the floor and shattered, having loosened from their wood supports or lath that was damaged by water long ago. To prevent more plaster from coming loose, a crew drilled long bolts into the ceiling with washers that are now holding the plaster in place.

### **Restoring an Era**

The third floor has never been open to the public. Little had been done to it since Governor Pat Brown had an office there in the 1960s.

The furnishings and decorations on the first two floors are a culmination of the mansion's long and illustrious history as home to 13 governors. The one era that had never been part of the decorating scheme, however, is that of when it was first built in 1877. The Victorian-era house had been redecorated so many times with each new occupant, that there were few clues to the original décor, until now.

With the discovery of the original painted-on decorations, the crew changed direction. Instead of pursuing restoration to the era of Governor Earl Warren (1943-1953), as the team had intended, they began researching what is known as the mansion's Gallatin-Steffens Period. It is named after the family who had the mansion built, Albert and Clemenza Gallatin, and the couple they sold it to a decade later, Joseph and Louisa Steffens.

"This is a curator's dream," said Museum Curator Kendra Dillard, who is conducting much of the detective work into the mansion's Gallatin-Steffens period. "Having the opportunity to figure out how the rooms on the third floor were furnished and how they were used by the Gallatin and Steffens families is fascinating."

Once the maintenance phase of the third floor is completed, Dillard and others will begin the restoration phase. By then, they will have completed their research and identified what furniture, rugs, wall hangings, and personal objects were present on the third floor during its first decade of existence. They will then go shopping and consult custom designers to recreate replicas of whatever is needed.

The lack of funds had kept the third floor static for 30 years while the Sacramento Historic Sites Association raised money for the day that has finally come. They are contributing \$90,000 to the third floor's restoration phase. When the work is finished next year, California State Parks plans to add the third floor on its guided tours open to the public.

### **About the Mansion**

*The Governor's Mansion State Historic Park, built in 1877, is located at 16<sup>th</sup> and "H" Streets in downtown Sacramento. Guided tours of the first two floors are held daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., departing hourly from the Mansion's Carriage House and Visitors' Center. To learn more, call (916) 323-3047 or visit [www.parks.ca.gov/governorsmansion](http://www.parks.ca.gov/governorsmansion) . # # # #*